

REWRITE



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HOW WELL DO YOU COMMUNICATE?

We all know that almost everyone all over the world either wants to write or believes he could as well as most professionals, did he but have the time. For this is still the age of the printing press and mass assimilation of ideas and feelings through words or pictures. Everyone practically is unconsciously enchanted with the idea that he is literate, but happily unaware that to transmit ideas, and, even more, emotion, demands the same amount of imagination, energy and disciplined know-how required by all the intricate and complex professional skills of this scientific civilization we live in.

Before everything else the transmission of ideas, thoughts and emotions is a job which represents communication. It is pleasant to write for one's own pleasure, but unless an author speaks the language of those to whom he would communicate his knowledge, feelings or enthusiasms, he has failed. This means he must use symbols his audience understands & comprehends. It is useless to speak an eloquent English or American if your listeners absorb only in terms of the Scandinavian or possibly the sign language. And if they do understand you, it is still required of you that you communicate with clarity, force and illumination. Not just with the halting literalness of a child.

This does not mean that all must write alike. Nor that the man of genius must limit himself to the painfully inarticulate level of the least literate in our society. There has been on the one hand many scorching attacks of those employing new techniques and original use of words. And on the other extolling of the comic strips as a new & more graphically and simplified means of communicating. The term "clarity" is in the air & now much used, but often little defined. It has much to commend it, but should never be permitted to constrain, confine, or circumscribe the genuine creative talent with new thoughts and skills. In a word, with new, improved things to say and ways to say them.

The second fundamental that those wishing to communicate must learn is that there is a vast difference between doing it among one's friends and doing it in public for money. A public writer whether serious or entertaining, is a skilled and disciplined artist. He has learned somehow the inescapable and often nerve-racking task of projecting whatever he has to say or feel or think, in terms that his audience can understand. He knows it is not enough for him to experience something himself. He must transmit it, share it and make his reader or listener experience & feel it for himself. Every parent knows that the child can take in much, but real experience, the rich red and white corpuscles of a life of one's own, cannot be swallowed down, like medicine, or learned at mother's knee. It must be absorbed through one's own pores

as we absorb the joys and triumphs, the aches and pains of intensive living in person, or living it vicariously ourselves on a printed page or some form of dramatic art.

That is why the third fundamental of communication, identification, is so important. We live in an age today of scientific reproduction. All the skill of men and machines, curiously, is dedicated to the pitiless examination and scrutiny of dramatic experience whether it be in the form of words or photographic pictures. There is terrific competition to catch and hold your attention. Every effort is made to stimulate your senses with appealing sensations, whether it be an advert. for a glamorous article of personal adornment, a romantic story or dramatic picture on a movie or TV screen.

That is why the author today is forced to use such skill in getting inside his characters and, yes, his reader. The latter wishes to identify himself as closely as he humanly can with the main character. He can only live one life in his own earthly body. But can live a thousand lives on the pages of a newspaper, book or dramatic story. We are all Confessions fans at heart whether taste draws us to the Comics or the Literary Story. We wish to experience the emotion vicariously. To imagine that we are the MC, living the story right here and now in the living present. For the time we enter an imaginary world of illusion, we are the MC. We ask ourselves, "What would I do if I were in his shoes?"

But this does not mean that the reader desires to be exclusively limited to the viewpoint of the MC. He wishes to identify himself with another for the moment, yes. To enlarge and widen the perimeter of his experience, but not to sacrifice the advantages, the perspective of his own eyes and heart. A reader wants paradoxically at the same time to suffer the terror of the gladiator and to observe with the detached, but fascinated & feasting eyes of the spectator, every overtone of the dramatic spectacle. In its rawest extreme this is the key to the successes of the old melodramas, where the beautiful, defenceless heroine lay bound to the rails, while the Northern Express thundered across the plain two minutes ahead of time; and at the other extreme to the appeal of the slow methodical self-torture of a Prince Hamlet. The reader is at once the hunter & hunted.

That is the fascination and also the difficult problem of really superb writing. The author must always be in control, yet never interfere. He must make his story-telling a meaningful experience that has the detached benefit of his ripened perspective, yet he may never intrude within the story circle. Be it story or biography, he must let the characters serve his purposes, yet live out within their own personalities the life allotted to them. So the final fundamental must always be the spell of illusion, the conviction it's true.

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NOT BULLETS, BUT IDEAS AND AN IDEAL

The defection of those high German officials to the Communist side points up a question on the lips of all Americans, and many of our friends throughout the world. Is our foreign policy the best we can advance? Will it bring peace or will it end in failure?

In the light of the apparent fizzling out of the EDC as we go to press, I should like to quote a wise commentary by Justice William O. Douglas:

"...War or peace no longer depends on containment of Communism, for the Communist forces have broken through the vast perimeter. War or peace turns on the political balance now in the world..."

"That danger is greater today than we are led to believe. The political balance is slowly shifting away from the West. The people of the world do not believe that America is empire-building. But they see America in the role of a powerful underwriter for—empire-builders. They see America fighting Communism abroad with weapons that only—increase Communism. They believe America is so militarily-minded as to be only interested in—military bases.

"We must resume our historic revolutionary

role. We have been pre-occupied with military bases. We must begin to seek bases in the hearts of men of all races. We must use the forum of the United Nations to plead the cause of equality, liberty, and independence—for all peoples. We must help the United Nations make the democratic front the most revered, the most respected, the most honored alliance in the world. If we do, the way to peace can be found."

Justice Douglas' recipe is not easy. It is difficult. Peoples that have for centuries been trodden down by dictators, must of necessity discover and learn the way of self-government. Against this pioneering path to freedom, the Communists have all the advantages of the outmoded, feudal method of government by force. It will take sympathy, patience and unselfish kindness, often under a whiplash of misunderstanding, and political self-seeking, to help our friends. The price is high, but worth every ounce of effort we put into it; all of the creative planning we can muster. We must be "big" human beings.

This adventure in true Christian living is inevitably tied to domestic policies here at home. Ellery Queen, celebrating the 25th anniversary of his career as a mystery writer, apparently has had the vision to see this. He has written a novel in which detection, mystery and suspense are only incidental. For the story has been keyed to the twin themes that wherever a man's safety, property, and freedom of thought are in danger, those belonging to every other man are in deadly peril. And secondly, whenever men may be deemed guilty merely by accusation instead of being proved guilty by due process of law, the rights of no man are secure.

It is true that we cannot sell to others a dream we do not believe in or practice here at home. We must, as Justice Douglas urges, return to our historic revolutionary role & become once more pioneers in leading all men to a happier and more fruitful way of life. We must apply our tremendous energy & know-how on the material level to guiding men on the spiritual one. We talk much about being good neighbors. The United Nations gives us the chance to be one. Next year the nations of the world will study ways to improve the UN. We have the rare opportunity to lead the world away from domination by a few powerful "big" nations, from the old evil of private unilateral deals under the table. Will we have the courage of our convictions, the imagination for real leadership? The Communists are very sensitive to the demands of an indignant and angry world opinion. We have a golden opening to require a revision of the veto power. To plead before a sympathetic & approving world that membership in the UN is a responsibility and a privilege; and that a new member should enter with clean hands and the disposition of a good neighbor.

Finally, note that both men we have quoted are writers. More than most men, writers can warm the climate for a more peaceful world.

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AN EXCITING SHORT STORY WORKSHOP

A very stimulating session at the Philadelphia Regional Writers' Conference was Elizabeth Abell's first workshop on the short story and novel. (Formerly an editor at Ballantine Books, she is now doing editorial work on the juvenile line of "First" books which are published by Franklin Watts.) Her viewpoint was that of the editor, but she showed in practical terms an editor could understand what it means for an author who tries to meet its requirements.

She stressed for instance, the difference between originality and freshness. "Tell an old, old story," she advised, "but discover a new angle. Bring to it something new, but also some universal truth, so the editorial reader will not exclaim, 'Oh, just another.' This is equally true of the pulps or The ATLANTIC."

Miss Abell was referring in this to basic situations. She demonstrated her point with a discussion of one of the stories turned in at the Conference. It dealt with the "Silver Chord" theme of a mother unwilling to let go of her son. In her analysis of this story of a son torn between his mother and the girl of his choice, Miss Abell first emphasized the triteness of the theme, then paid tribute to the fresh angle the author found for the familiar material. In her detailed, creative analysis, in which she invited and encouraged the writers present to join in & help build the story up, Miss Abell pointed out how the author had taken a stock situation and had individualized it through well visualized characterization that made mother, son and girl unique instead of types.

She used this story to illustrate how the inexperienced writer tells the wrong story. She referred to it as the "story that never was written down on paper." This ms. seemed to be the boy's story. It was about him and the author used the accident that served as climax symbolically. The boy was slipping away from the mother off a precipice. Actually, as Miss Abell let the group bring out for itself, it was the mother who was falling into the abyss. The story failed simply because the writer tried to achieve surprise by withholding from the reader until almost the end the real nature of the situation. (I felt, too, that her ending grew out of plot sense of what was dramatic rather than complete understanding of her characters' two-way emotional relations with one another.)

Miss Abell returned at intervals to her own theme: the need for new eyes. "I can't give them to you. You are not going to get them, through your own efforts, overnight." She urged her listeners to develop fresh eyes. A project she suggested is to take some familiar object and then really study it. "See it with new eyes, eyes you did not have before. Take anything: your own front door, a treasured room. Observe it as if you had never in

your life seen it before.

She devoted a good deal of time to speaking about that familiar dictum: having something to say. "You also must know how to say it." Knowing how to say it can be taught by critics and teachers of creative writing, she believes. But no one can teach you "what to say." Amusingly, she pointed out that today many skilled professional writers "say very little, but say it well, whereas those with a lot to say, express it very badly." Having something to say obviously makes it more difficult because then you have to control, as it were, both situation and ideas, feelings of the writer as well as those felt by the characters.

Miss Abell listed the usual characteristics of the story with something to say: the theme, moral, message. But what really is important, she said, is that "you know & want to share something no one else does. You've a compulsion to share it. The world is disinterested, but you are not!" She described and urged that writers find ways and means, the technique to project their own enthusiasm, like a missionary. "Yet you will usually succeed better," she advised, "if you do not make the 'message' too obvious, but keep it hidden and let the reader discover it for himself."

She came out strongly, however, for writers not qualifying or hedging. "It is original, good, truthful, honest writing, which gains firm hold of readers." There are no half-writers, she believes. A writer has to have information on different levels, character, situation, experience, technique and so on. "It is not the scope of a story," she declared, seemingly feeling for words, "but the degree to which you have succeeded in a realistic and moving telling of what you've wanted to say."

As an editor Miss Abell stressed the fact that there is no magic formula. And speaking frankly from her own experience and that of writers she had observed, she said writers, inexperienced writers, often suffered three weaknesses. They spend too little time learning and perfecting their craftsmanship; they fail to learn from their mistakes, and they spend too much time on too few ideas. She herself, she said, didn't find soon enough, in spite of trying many kinds of writing, the place where she could succeed. She tried many but not enough.

Above all, she urged writers not to study so hard that they become self-conscious. You learn how you did it, and then the trick, if it is just a trick, is lost. She has on occasion seen professional change overnight. "Write freely and project the truth, as you see it," she advised. "Be yourself, not Bohemian. Avoid the dangers of popularity. It's deadly to plagiarize or repeat yourself, one reason why popular books are always different from each other. Don't conform. Write as you feel. Then you will never go 'dry'."

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FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD POETRY

By Elva Ray Harris

THE POETS WORKSHOP

The poem for discussion—Julia Anna Cook's:

THE CONCERT

By Julia Anna Cook

With each pure note, wreath-like and thin,
The master's bow draws from within
The magic of the violin.

All unconsummated and fair
Lost loves, old anguishes, are there,
As Kreisler's music floods the air.

And memories stirred by music's whim
Wake from a sea of dreams...time-dim.
This listener...what are dreams to him?

He sits, with bowed head, in his chair,
Drawn down the years, once more aware
Of lightfoot loves with tangled hair:

Loves, melody makes his to keep
Whenever violins shall weep
And rouse youth's memories from their sleep.

Let's start with the good things again this month, the things people applauded in the poem. Later on, the criticisms.

Alice Curtis: "I liked the tercet form, and thought it suitable to the subject. Also the musical quality of the lines, the use of vowel sounds and consonants. I especially liked line 12."

Emily May Young: "I like this poem. It is sad, but music does something to everyone, and it brings memories to this dreamer. The poem is well written."

Bessie H. Hartling: "'The Concert' is beautiful in imagery and expression. Its 'homey' with a human interest appeal. The 4th stanza is my favorite, especially the last line."

Doris Philbrick: "It is really an inspired poem. We actually become the listener, while reading it."

Bessie Berg: "...pleasing in sound, attractive on the page, and with a sensitive appreciation of its subject...otherwise, it's poignant and beautiful."

Ora Lee Parthesius: "I find the poem appealing—little to criticize. 'Of lightfoot loves with tangled hair' is a delightful line."

Theda L. Pobst: "The rhyme and rhythm fit the theme quite well."

Clarence C. Adams: "This poem presents indeed a beautiful picture and has great possibilities, but..."

Leta M. Edwards: "It is of the 'stuff of which poems are made,' but....I like the tercet—verse form and think the author has caught a

good deal of the mood we feel when we allow violin music to carry us through 'Lost Loves, old anguishes'."

Jacqueline Tweton: "It rings bells. It brings out feelings everyone has experienced. Music affects me, too, disastrously or for the better, depending on my mood and the music itself. I think this is true of most people."

Olive Boynton: "The gaiety and innocency implied in the line 'Of lightfoot loves with tangled hair' are delightfully refreshing butI also like that ineffably lovely line, 'Whenever violins shall weep'."

That summarizes the good that readers saw in the poem. I think a critic always should look for the good points first. It is so easy to get into the habit of seeing only things that could be improved. Then, too, it's necessary for us to see the poem's "sins" in order to help a poet to do better work. Following are the group's suggestions for making this poem a better vehicle for carrying over to an audience the idea the author wishes to communicate, the emotion she wishes to share.

Twelve of the sixteen commentators thought that line 4 is not right.

Alice Curtis: "Line 4 is difficult to say.. 'All' is unnecessary for either the sense or the rhythm."

Hylah R. Bender revises thus:
"Unconsummated loves and fair
With all old anguishes are there."

Grace Stillman Minck: "Stress seems off."

Bessie H. Hartling: "The meaning of the second stanza would be clarified by putting the second line first, which seems to be the natural order anyway. As:

Lost loves, old anguishes are there,
Unconsummated, — fair."

Doris Philbrick: "I would favor a more descriptive word to portray the 'loves', as he actually sees them in his vision. 'Unconsummated', in a sense is a negative word & expresses such a distance from its companion, 'fair'. A picturesque, youthful adjective, I feel, is needed. How about:

All radiantly young and fair?

'Unconsummated' is so often used in the marriage court that I'm leery of it. We have no inkling as to this man's character, whether he may have been a poet, like Poe, mourning a cherished wife, or, perhaps, a mariner with a sweetheart in every port and every one of them betrayed and abandoned, and his conscience bearing down upon him. Or could 'loves' be abstract, as lost opportunities in life?"

Bessie Berg: "I am disturbed at the uneven meter which should be more smooth. For example:

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'All unconsummated, fair'."

Ora Lee Parthesius: "...a bit rough compared to the smoothness of the other lines."

Frances A. Fiske: "Sounds awkward & forced."

Clarence O. Adams: "Unconsummated is a jaw-breaker."

Jacqueline Tweton: "I got lost temporarily, in line 4, and the first half of line 5. I wonder if they could be arranged so as to be a bit easier to read?"

Olive Boynton: "'Unconsummated' is too rackety, too staccato. It startles the reader away from the almost ethereal mood which the poem has created. 'Fair' is overworked rhyme-making."

All unrequited love is there,
All anguishes of yesteryear."

Julia Hull Winner blue pencils five lines & rewrites the poem in couplets. She says she thinks stanza 2 is better without the first line.

It is interesting to note that while most people found the stanza perfectly clear and objected only to the break in rhythm, & the overtones of "unconsummated", there were two who felt there was an objectionable inversion there. The trouble as I see it is not alone the inversion, but the fact that "All unconsummated and fair" refers to "old anguishes" as well as to "Lost loves". This, obviously, is inconsistent.

One could argue that because there isn't a comma after "fair" that line refers only to "Lost loves", and technically they would be correct. But there is a pause after "fair", which is unavoidable because it comes at a line-ending and is a rhyme word. A reader, therefore, cannot help but make a pause however slight, under those circumstances, and the tendency on first reading it is to make a real pause. The poem would be more enjoyable if you did not have to back-track in order to keep modifying the words correctly. In their revisions Miss Bender and Miss Boynton have overcome this inconsistency.

Mrs. Philbrick and Miss Boynton are on the right track in trying to substitute for "unconsummated". According to Webster "consummate" means "to bring to completion; to perfect". There is also of course the special and specific definition having to do with a marriage, the sexual aspect. The way the word is used here together with "fair" would indicate that unconsummated love is superior to consummated love. In the fuller, richer sense of the word this is not possible. Of course, in the physical sense, consummated love does not always come up to the anticipation of it.

But I do not believe that Mrs. Cook meant mere physical love to creep into this poem. She is concerned here with the heart. Miss

Boynton's "unrequited love" is not the right word either, for it has no overtones of joy and gladness. However, she makes a good point when she suggests, "lightening that second stanza with its 'lost loves' and its 'old anguishes'". For consistency it will have to be lightened, or the 'lightfoot loves with tangled hair' darkened. But lines 4 and 5 should not be lightened too much, otherwise the violin would have nothing to weep about! And weeping of the violin almost makes the poem"

In the first eight lines the poet is concerned with what the master is bringing out of the violin for any and all to take. Then in the 9th line she introduces an individual listener and from there on suggests what he is getting out of the master's music. So if the inconsistency of reference in lines 4 and 5 is overcome, we can have both radiantly young and fair lost loves, and old anguishes in that stanza, because the master is bringing them all out for any individual mood to pick up. Then the author can go on as she's done and narrow the poem down to what one individual listener is getting, without taking the "weeping" out of the violin.

I should like to point out in passing that "yesteryear" in Miss Boynton's revision is a good word, but does not belong in this poem. The fact that it is obsolete makes it sound to the reader dragged in for rhyming purposes. Obsolete words can very often be used to advantage in humorous verse where one uses them deliberately for their tongue-in-cheek value.

Miss Boynton has another suggestion about the second stanza: "It would be better not to name the violinist. It seems to take some of the shimmering, gossamer texture of the poem away. Why not use a descriptive adjective instead? Keep the poem impersonal."

Doris Philbrick: "The name of Kreisler represents a touch of bad taste. Many other violin artists might read this poem each capable of drawing his or her listeners within the mood described. In fact, a novice might. Please try, 'As haunting music floods the air'"

They have made a good point. We are not concerned with whom is playing here. Only that he can evoke memories in the particular listener we are interested in.

To go back to the very beginning, six of the workshop group believed the title could be improved.

Jacqueline Tweton: "How about 'Memories at a Concert'?"

Clarence O. Adams: "'Echoes' might fit this theme better, or something on that idea."

Ora Lee Parthesius: "'Loves to Keep' might pique the reader's interest."

Bessie H. Hartling: The title is misleading. We expect an orchestra, and a large audience,

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but are introduced to only one listener and one musical instrument. I'd suggest 'Memories in Melody'."

Olive Boynton: "...some word or phrase that indicates the spell cast by the violin."

Miscellaneous comments of interest:
Julia Hull Winner: "Good violin playing never is 'thin'. 'Magic' is trite. 'Thin' has overtones of weakness, while what is meant, I think, is 'fine' or 'delicate'."

Bessie H. Hartling: "I don't like 'magic'.. 'Charm' expresses the meaning better but it would change the rhythm. Does 'whim' convey what the writer intended? 'Time-dim' I like."

Yes, "whim" does sound rhyme-induced, and a better word might be substituted.

Two contributors objected to accents falling on prepositions. While it is not good to accent prepositions indiscriminately, placing them on a strong beat occasionally does make an effective variation of meter. Take "from" in the second line for instance. The fact that it is preceded by "draws", a word that takes a relatively long time to pronounce, makes that foot a spondee instead of an iamb, a welcome variation. In the third line "of" provides a different kind of variation. The syllable immediately preceding it ("io") and the syllable after it ("the") both are pronounced very quickly, so that really it requires a shorter time to pronounce that line than either of the two preceding lines. The natural tendency in reading is to pause on a word like "magic" and then hurry along with the short syllables. This accomplishes, naturally, two things. First, more emphasis is given the word "magic", which is a key word whether it's exactly the right word or not, and which makes plausible what follows. Second, the meter in that line is varied. Both of these are good things.

The principle behind the variation in both lines is that of tempo. The second line was lengthened by the use of a spondee (two long beats), and the second half of the 3rd line was shortened by the use of a pyrrhic (that is, two short beats), causing the reader unconsciously to lengthen the first half.

In the tenth line there is still one more type of variation. The third foot "head, in" is a trochee instead of an iamb. This variation neither lengthens nor shortens the line as a whole. But the tempo is changed from that of a perfect iambic line because we linger, when we come to "bowed head" and skip lightly over "in his".

Olive Boynton and Theda L. Pobst questioned the repetition of short "e" and "i" rhymes so close together. I think it could be argued both ways. Personally, I rather like the repetition because it suggests the recurring strains of music, but I reserve judgment. I might like it better if I were to see it written with more variation in rhyme words. For

the same reason I would disagree with the suggestion that the poem be cut and written in couplets. Tight writing is laudable, but the tercet form of this poem helps to put readers into the mood of a listener to music.

When Mrs. Cook submitted her poem for the Workshop she wrote: "The main reason I would like this criticized is to know if everyone hates very sentimental verse." It is interesting to note that only one person commented on this point either for or against.

Alice Curtis: "The poem verges on the sentimental. The general effect is one of too great sweetness."

There is a large market for poems expressing a genuine sentiment. If a poet is really sincere in his sentiment and does not allow it to get out-of-hand, he will generally find an audience. However, it is difficult to know at just what point sentiment is being overdone, since it is largely a matter of taste. Some audiences will take more of it, you will discover, than others. Purely intellectual poems find a limited outlet. If you want to be read by millions you will include genuine emotion in your poetry.

Doris Philbrick and Olive Boynton made a suggestion that I applaud: to end the poem with "Whenever violins shall weep."

It seems to me that some work ought to be done on "what are dreams to him?" Didn't the author mean: "What dreams are there for him? What is he dreaming of?" The way it is written it has overtones of "Of what consequence are dreams to him?" That line is ambiguous. It can be read either way. It would be better if the author would make it less possible for a reader to take the wrong interpretation.

Suggested markets were AMERICAN BARD, BLUE MOON, WESTMINSTER Magazine, SCIMITAR & SONG, ECHOES OF WEST VA., STEPLADDER, poetry columns or pages of newspapers, religious magazines, farm journals, love publications. After revision, I think I would not hesitate to try it on the women's slicks. Competition is keen in that field, but nothing ventured is nothing gained.

Now let us turn to the poem for discussion in the December issue. It is a very different type of poem. It is:

FOR ADAM

By Alice Curtis

When, walking a straitly narrow path,
Eve heard that prescient hiss,
She might have gone the other way
And known unknowing bliss.

Had Atalanta, husky wench,
While running in that race,
Ignored the rolling, golden fruit
She'd have trumped her partner's ace.

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If you would finish chopping wood
And help me shake this bough,
Do you think we'd find the apples green—
Or ready for eating now?

This poem has never been sent to market—though an earlier version of it was submitted to another workshop. Miss Curtis has written an alternate second stanza because of the difficulty a friend of hers had in appreciating the point of the original one. Here it is:

Had Atalanta in her race
Ignored that fruitful trap,
She would have won the meet that day
And lost another chap.

Which stanza do you prefer, think should be used?

Miss Curtis who teaches in New York City, has been interested in poetry since she was very young. She began to write it when still a freshman in high school. But only recently has she begun to submit for publication.

Deadline for comments is Nov. 10th. Get them in earlier if possible, and please put them on a separate sheet of paper, so I can send them on to the author. It would help me a lot in editing them if you would do as Miss Curtis did, this time in her comments on "The Concert". Say what you like about the poem. Then list what you don't like. Then give as many constructive suggestions for its revision as you can. Finally, list markets that you think would be interested. If you pick these carefully, you will be improving your own ability to hit a target with a bull's eye shot.

We pay \$1.00 for each poem used by us for the Workshop. To be eligible a poem must be accompanied by a criticism of the poem that is currently being discussed. Poems used in the Workshop may be revised, and then submitted again to some other magazines, provided the author surely tells the editors of the past history of the poem. Some editors object to material that has been used anywhere else—even in practice form. You help yourself if you help all writers to foster good friendly relations with editors. Good luck.

LAST MINUTE MARKET NEWS

STORY PARADE, Barbara Nolen, lit. edit'r, 630 5th Ave., NYC 20, recently a contributor sent us a rejection slip, which reads:

"Our issues for the remaining months of 1954 are already planned and in process of manufacture. Changes in format and policy are being contemplated which make it inadvisable to accept any further mss. or artwork for 1955."

I have written to Miss Noble for more details. As soon as they are available we will pass them along. This is just another example of how you can help us to bring you up-to-the minute reports on markets.

The COUNTRY GENTLEMAN, Louis Reid, as. ed., Independence Square, Philadelphia 5, Pa., offered this bit of advice to a contributor a few days ago:

"All our material is devoted to practical farming and farming matters. We ask that each story we buy qualify with regard to this question: what can a farmer go do on his own farm as a result of this information? That keeps us using a lot of "how to" stories, of course, and that is exactly what we like to publish."

It is true that the big circulation magazines for farmers and their wives have been becoming increasingly "service" magazines. A "story" in their sense of the word does not refer to fiction. It is practically always a factual article answering Mr. Reid's visualization. The almost lone exception is RURAL NEW YORKER which slips off the straight-and-narrow path occasionally with background articles about the country and living in other days, or other ways of farming.

THE FICTION WORKSHOP

Well, we had a larger number of entries in the workshop this time. About a dozen. The problem did what it was intended to do—got the writers doing a little creative work as a result of the thinking they did about the stories they picked to read. That was good!

The chief trouble was that most of the authors failed to get much originality in the rewrites they did of the scenes they were inspired by. Too many simply did just that—a slavish rewrite of the original, or a tight condensation. I was hoping that more writers would create a scene of their own. In other words, would use the story as a point of departure. And so create a little world of illusion of their own.

Next workshop. And that brings me to next quarter's exercise, which can be a fruitful and profitable one. I want each contributor to (1) read a published story; (2) to think about the basic situation, and then (3) develop in a short note to me an entirely new idea or a new facet of the same situation. A new plot that shows no sign of the source. I want you to (4) sell me on the idea that you have a story you simply must get out of your trunk. Deadline: November 10. I'll pay \$1.00 for the memo and notes I use.

For several reasons I do not want to publish any of this month's entries. Most were too long. The short ones were not good discussion material. Unexpectedly this issue is very tight for space. And WGS work limited, unfortunately, my time for serious study of the published stories and mss.

I plan to discuss some of the entries next issue. The \$1 award for any mss. used will be held over. I hope that more writers will try a dramatic scene based on a published story (See: June issue). And everyone try this current project. It will start you on a story!

REWRITE

WE TALK WITH MRS. REDMAN AT THE POST

During our stay in Philadelphia, Bill had a long and pleasant telephone visit with Mrs. Peggy Dowst Redman. Her husband was seriously ill in a hospital at the time and consequently she was limiting her engagements as much as possible to essential POST business. However, very generously she talked with me about the SAT. EVE. POST routines in selecting poems for upwards of half an hour.

She explained that The POST uses six poems an issue, and she tries to divide them half and half between serious and light. "I do not of course handle the 'Post Scripts' page which is made up approximately two months in advance of publication," she quickly added. She said that there they treat humor as filler and like to build up a back-log of filler and quips. She spoke humorously of other editors sometimes considering poetry also as filler, and wondering why she wants to publish so much of it.

Her length limit is 16 lines, and naturally she welcomes it even shorter. I got the impression that she takes verse seriously & works hard to make this a provocative, outstanding feature POST readers will enjoy in every issue. Six poems an issue totals 312, per year, or 156 serious and light poems. We talked about a number of poets in the large WCS Family, who have sold The POST sporadically or frequently. I think we both widened our mutual interest in helping writers.

Peggy Dowst Redman is a friendly, helpful editor who enjoys people. She told me a number of anecdotes concerning poets she'd met personally or had taken the trouble to look up on periodical visits to her sister, a New England resident not far from us. Only this week a fiction writer, who has not sold The POST, told me how Mrs. Redman had commented briefly, but creatively, on some of her mss. she'd read. I have seen other similar letters.

Curiously, we began our chat with a letter Peggie Dowst Redman had written to a poet friend of ours. It was written in May of this year, and it explains how The POST selects poetry. With Mrs. Redman's permission and that of the recipient, we reprint it:

"Although our summer quota is filled (May 7th), we won't be taking on fall verse till June. We start buying for each season in the first week of the preceding month, i.e., summer verse in March, fall in June, and so on. And we fill our quota in from four to eight weeks." This gives the Magazine a chance to be fairly fresh and topical since poems are not usually held over. Obviously also, Mrs. Redman can give quick replies to much of the material that does not apply to the quarter she is working on. I imagine that poets who observe these deadlines, will find that the great mass of poems The POST receives won't be in direct competition with their poems. A fact that should help the morale quite a bit.

Poetry, more than many other types of writing is a personal matter. But before and after talking with Mrs. Redman I read a large number of poems in The POST. It seemed to me that while each might appeal to a different segment of the Magazine's very large circulation all of them basically used a universal theme as a point of departure. This would of course give them wider readership, a necessary requirement in such a big slick. Even the poems with a more sectional or specialized interest, could be identified as being applicable to a larger sphere.

I don't know whether this is a consciously taken part of Mrs. Redman's judgment, or not. But I do know she convinced me that my previous assumption from all I had heard about her as being an exceedingly competent, hard working editor, who yet had time to be seriously interested in individual writers, was correct.

WHAT MAKES READERS WANT TO READ?

How many of you have ever stopped to make even a casual study of what I referred to above as "universal themes"? Or to the narrative "eye-stoppers" and emotional "drives" to which a good many professional writers of fiction often consciously hitch their yarns. Joseph Shallit, mystery novelist, presented his listeners a list of what writers in his field consider most certain to stop a reader in his tracks, and arouse curiosity, interest and the will to read further. These are in the order in which he listed them, an order not necessarily inflexible:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| (1) Preservation of life | (2) Food |
| (3) Money | (4) Attention or Power |
| (5) Preservation of Race | Sex, Love, Family, etc. |
| (6) Social Problems | Career, Mate, Sex |

In this connection how many of you saw an opportunity in the READERS' DIGEST \$52,000.00 contest an opportunity to test your power to recognize a compelling article. That contest to select the six articles in their August issue most readers would like to read is now closed. But since the winner will not be announced until the December issue comes out on the newsstands, you still have plenty of time to weigh your opinion against the results of the national survey made for the READERS' DIGEST in anticipation of this contest to show the actual choices of readers.

Naturally, poets are not circumscribed by such a list as the above. But if you read a number of issues of The POST or any magazine of your choice, which uses verse, you quickly will begin to make a list of recurring & often varied similar themes. Perhaps some of them are seasonal or timely, others may be about nature, animals or the aspects of life and the philosophies that have given hope or courage to people in all ages. Religious or other specialized magazines have their variations of what they consider wide appeal.

REWRITE

CURRENT PRIZE CONTESTS

ATLANTIC Novel Contest for 1955, 8 Arlington St., Boston 16, Mass., offers \$5,000. "No restrictions whatsoever as to author or subject. Address above for circular."

POETRY DIGEST, John De Stefano, 1228 Meriden Road, Waterbury, Conn., through Albert Ralph Korn's generosity, is offering \$15 as an award for the best short essay (not over 1,000 words) published in PD in 1954. Subject: "The Desirability of Clarity in Poetry." Open to all authors. Closes: Dec. 1st. PD is a bi-monthly. (Other prizes in annual subscriptions are also paid. And one \$5.00.)

Fiction Contest Editor, J. B. Lippincott Co., East Washington Square, Philadelphia 5, Pa., offers \$2,500 (one-half advance against royalties) for the best ms. by a young novelist (American or Canada) under 35 years of age. Primarily for new writers, but previous publication does not disbar one. A complete ms. between 60,000 and 150,000 words. Minimum of 25,000 words, plus a full outline is essential. Closes: February 28, 1955.

Blue Ribbon Recipes, Box 1765, Grand Central Sta., NYC 17. Rushmore Paper Mills and Groveton Papers Co., makers of Blue Ribbon & Vanity Fair Products, offer \$50, five \$10 & 50 prizes in merchandise for "favorite main dish recipes." Contestants must attach "the numerals '80' cut from the front of a 'Blue Ribbon Napkin package; enclose your name and address and those of your dealer." The cash prizes are doubled if various insignia from Vanity Fair tissues are included. Each contest closes on the last day of the month. Identical awards go to the dealer.

Dodd, Mead & Co. - COMPACT Seventeenth Summer Literary Competition, 432 4th Ave., NYC 16, offers \$1,250 for a novel of literary merit for young people. (\$250 for first serial rights to COMPACT, \$1,000 as advance on royalties.) Closes: Nov. 15, 1954.

National Poetry Day Award, Lane Van Hook, 154 Pearsall Drive, Mt. Vernon, N. Y., for the best poem not over 32 lines on New York City. Albert Ralph Korn is awarding \$50. One poem only, submitted anonymously. Deadline: October 1, 1954. Open to all poets.

(Note: On P. 12, this issue, we have published the rules for the Albert Ralph Korn-REWRITE Prize award for Quatrains. Mr. Korn is awarding three prizes of \$15, \$10 and \$5. The Contest closes on Jan. 15, 1955, but already a number of entries have been received. It is open to all poets.)

Dodd, Mead & Co. - BOYS' LIFE Prize Competition, 432 4th Ave., NYC 16, offers \$2,000 plus royalties for a boys' story (ages 12-16) 45,000 to 80,000 words. Authors of winning mss. will be required to adapt them for serialization. "Distinctive literary merit & the finest American traditions" desired. Contest closes: Nov. 15, 1954.

A NEW POETRY FEATURE AND SOME NEWS

The August issue of the ATLANTIC MONTHLY, apparently starting a new feature entitled: "The Young Poets," headed it with this editorial statement:

"The ATLANTIC receives on an average 1,500 poems a month. They come as frequently from men as from women, and are evidence of an interest in poetry which never slackens. As an incentive for those writers yet unestablished, we shall from time to time devote a number of pages to the work of young poets."

This may be a second step in a new trend. In our last issue we called attention to an extra page of poems Margaret Cousins, editor of GOOD HOUSEKEEPING, has been running semi-occasionally. Six authors were published in the ATLANTIC feature (August) and their poems averaged longer than most popular magazine verse.

WEE WISDOM, Lee's Summit, Mo., Unity juvenile magazine, celebrated its 61st birthday with the August issue. Each year it tries to use an especially good piece of writing from a child on the Writers' Guild pages that is too long for the regular monthly issues. The August issue is made a special one in other departments, too.

Pocket Books has taken over PermaBooks, a division of Doubleday & Co. It will try, so far as possible to publish the file of books under contract to PermaBooks. But beginning next year the list of Perma-Pocket books is to be smaller.

Here's a News-peg. The 50th anniversary of Theodore Roosevelt as president of the U.S. comes Nov. 8th. Try a newspaper feature. It is too late to catch magazines.

AIM, FIRE, HIT, THEN CHECK UP!

Here is a practical suggestion from selling writer Helen Langworthy. "You might suggest to your readers that every six months, or whatever other regular period they prefer, they take stock on their sales. That means, to break them down into categories: fiction or articles, short or long, etc. Doing so, they will discover, sometimes to their surprise, their own personal trends, and best-paying types."

"One would think that writers would without any 'research' readily recognize such a pattern. But I do it at six month intervals and am sometimes quite surprised."

It is true one does not usually see these things unless he consciously looks for them his writing and his selling. One can't tell a writer too often to "study the book" i. e., be familiar with the magazines he hopes ultimately to write for. And this is merely a logical extension of that policy. Having practiced it, you do some research to check up on where you have succeeded the best!

REWRITE

HOW'S YOUR BATTING AVERAGE?

Acceptances reported or seen this quarter:

Winona Nichols

Story: 12/15 (2-part juvenile).

Bessie Berg

Poems: COUNTRY POET (Summer), SCIMITAR & SONG (July), KFI "Night Owls" (L. A., Cal.) (3)

Article: POETRY DIGEST.

Margie B. Boswell

Poems: CHROMOTONES, POESY BOOK. AM. POETRY Magazine.

Ber Temple

Poems & Short Story: Boston POST.

Helen Langworthy

Articles: The APOSTLE, FORWARD, VISION, Grand Rapids PRESS. (Board of Christian Education, Pittsburg, Pa. reprinted the FORWARD piece.)

Short Story: 'TEENS.

Rebecca Phillips

Article: Montreal STAR.

Frances A. Fiske

Filler & Poem: Boston POST.

Send in your notes. They tell editors you are writing, and give other writers a size-up of what editors are buying.

Strong Medicine! Helen Gaylord Knapp, member of the faculty, Randolph-Macon Women's College, told the Virginia Highlands Festival, Abingdon, Va., that the first two, and last words of two paragraphs can sell or be a rejection cause in a short story. Believe it?

AN INSIDE LOOK FROM A JUVENILE EDITOR

TWELVE/FIFTEEN, Rowena Ferguson, 810 Broad-Nashville 2, Tenn., has given us an unusual and very valuable piece of information as to its market needs in this exclusive report:

"It may be that professional writers don't realize how much easier it is for the kind of publication we represent to get fiction than nonfiction. That is to say, our market today is much more open to qualified articles and features than to short stories and serials. Rarely do we find good nonfiction among unsolicited mss.

"I would suggest to your readers that they make a study of the nonfiction content of our TWELVE/FIFTEEN if they are interested in this kind of writing. It goes without saying the subject matter and style must be appropriate to the early teen-age and that the pieces of course must be of high literary quality. In the case of some kinds of articles, first-class pictures always help."

This is good advice from one of the nicest juvenile editors and a well paying market.

MATTERS OF INTEREST TO WRITERS

If you have not done so, you should without fail look up and read in the July issue and four succeeding issues, of LADIES' HOME JOURNAL play producer Richard Aldrich's biography of his marriage to Gertrude Lawrence. The story of two distinguished personalities in the world of the Theater. The Cinderella story of two wonderfully human people, both possessing those all too rarely combined attributes of talent, character and integrity.

Bill's and Dick's trails crossed briefly, when they "made" the Harvard Dramatic Club, and followed one another in the famous Harvard 47 Workshop, pioneer course in creative writing, which the University did its puritan best to disavow. So I can say without a vestige of prejudice that every writer will grow by a thorough study of the technically interesting form, skilled objective writing and absorbing story of the inner life of two strong personalities in the highly competitive field of entertainment. At the very least it is a study in honest reporting and good taste.

FTC Report on Coffee Price. Anyone who is a coffee drinker, should read the FTC's report. It is enlightening to be reassured the high prices of last winter, not the result of crop damage or scarcity, were apparently entirely due to speculation and unwise trading rules on the N.Y. Coffee and Sugar Exchange.

Doubleday & Co. has started a new series, original novels for younger readers by name writers. Phil Stong, Richard Llewellyn, etc.

LITTLE LEAGUER, is now being published by Little League Baseball, Inc. Williamsport, Pa. Six times a year.

Michigan State College will celebrate its Centennial in 1955. It was the first of the so-called "land grant" colleges, established under the Morrill Act of 1862. That is a news-peg for articles.

ESSENCE, Joseph Payne Brennan, 55 Trumbull St., New Haven 10, Conn., a new little magazine (does not pay), is rather definite in its likes and dislikes. "We use only 8/9 poems an issue. Interested in quality rather than sheer numbers of verses published... definitely not intended for nice little old ladies who write about 'God in the garden', and admire Edgar Guest. Welcome 'off-trail' work which may be taboo in other magazines. We want newer concepts and fresh phraseology... poems should have compression and impact. Sample copy rate, 20¢." Twice a year.

IDEALS, Van B. Hooper, Ideals Publishing Co., 3510 W. St. Paul Ave., Milwaukee 1, Wis., a slick appearing bi-monthly using lots of color plate work. \$6.50 a year, \$1.25 an issue. No sample copies. We are grateful to friend James Neill North for a copy. Uses a large number of poems (some reprinted). Each issue a special theme. Scheduled 6 months ahead.

REWRITE

THE MURDER, MYSTERY AND TWO EXPERTS ON IT

A very interesting discussion of a number of writing problems was held by Hannah Lees one evening at the Philadelphia Conference. Her guest on what is popularly known as the "supper show" (the 6:30 workshop for people unable to attend the morning, and afternoon workshops) was Matthew Head. In private life he is John Canaday, a member of the Department of Art & Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. Like Miss Lees, however, he specializes in mystery fiction, particularly the 200-page popular sort.

It was a lively session at which a generous dozen or so of us gathered around the two leaders and threw questions in to be chewed over. Mr. Head was particularly helpful on a subject of peculiar interest to many spare-time writers: how to get a book written in a summer vacation. He mentioned such personal handicaps as two young boys, which meant he had to write mainly after 8 P. M. "You have just got to write it," he suggested is perhaps the best help in overcoming the resistance to start. He had just six weeks & had to get it finished or lose a year. "I began by setting myself a regular stint of working three hours every day. But after I had done a sum in arithmetic I changed to 5 ms. pages every day."

He believes every writer is beset by fear that he can't write and this is largely the reason for trying to avoid going to a desk. He thinks the answer is a sort of hypnosis. To get interested in the story and to learn to feel a confidence in "this is the best on this I can do." In my experience this is an exceptionally sound diagnosis. It should be comforting to beginners to know that only a very few writers ever escape this feeling of uneasiness entirely. It decreases, naturally with increasing experience. But even the most hard boiled professional feels recurring twinges when he is working on an important story. The best method for fighting it is to think about and make one's self feel a quickening excitement and interest in the idea. It's like going in swimming. Some people torture themselves by wading in an inch at a time, while others plunge in and get it over with. Probably the last word on this is what public speakers stress: forgetfulness of self and interest in how you can best serve the audience.

Mr. Head and Hannah Lees discussed "viewpoint" at some length. They agreed that the third person angle is usually best. Miss Lees felt that some stories obviously called for one or the other. Mr. Head said that an "I" viewpoint for 200 pages could irritate reader if it were over-played, then admitted he often used it himself and passed around a copy of his latest book, to show (1) this method of writing; and (2) how he started with the climax, then went back to write the story.

A considerable discussion of murder methods developed. Both writers agreed that the

over bizarre method defeats itself. Mr. Head prefers a very simple method. Miss Lees offered the opinion that a unique method must be thoroughly researched and checked. Mr. Head said it also consumes too much space in explanations and so simply cannot be used in the average soft cover mystery. "Good character and violent motives," he added, prove acceptable to most readers. "Shoot 'em dead or hit 'em over the head with a blunt instrument," he laughingly advised. Special circumstances and color in telling the story as well as sound informational background will sustain the interest. Finally, these writers pointed out that a too original murder method cannot be concealed as well till the end of the story. It requires special knowledge and that means the reader can guess who the murderer is more easily.

They also said that a common reason has a better reader pull. Seven or eight characters, with four or five being major ones, is the best recipe. Too many make it confusing and dissipate interest. In seeking to aid a writer in analyzing his own material and to study that of other writers, they suggested two questions: "Where do you like it? Why? ...and: Where didn't you like it? Why not?" And as a sort of reverse they said, "Readers may believe it, but not like it. If, however they believe it, the chances are much better they will like it."

Finally, they both shouted down their interest in the "true crime" type of story. A murder in real life is dull and sordid, they said. In books it is a means to an end, and therefore, can be and is glorified, to make the mystery and detection theme more interesting. In their estimation a story's sales, speaking generally, depend one-third on the author's name, one-third on the cover, & one third on the inside pocket package.

Having listened to these authors, I found it very interesting a few minutes later, to hear Joseph Shallit reiterate the same fundamentals. He said he wrote about Philadelphia because that is the region he knows. A careful check on all death methods is absolutely essential. He uses no tricky methods because they disclose the murderer too easily. "Simple methods are more convincing and they increase reader belief," he said. The simple and direct murder mystery is the most popular, he believes.

NEWS FROM EDITORS AND WRITERS

As we go to press news from the 1954 Harper Prize Novel Contest is: 830 entries, 7 accepted for publication, and a winner will probably have been chosen by late August. In 1952, 600 entries, 2 were published, and no prize given.

The Screen, Radio and Television Guilds of the Authors' League of America have separated from the parent body. We regret this move. There should be more rather than less writers working together for common welfare.

REWRITE

A FAMOUS CLUB AND A PERSPECTIVE

KANSAS CITY POETRY Magazine, Lillian Turner Findley, publisher, Box 14, Kansas City, 41, Mo., which has a guest editor for every (monthly) issue, published an unusually interesting editorial feature by the July editor, Elizabeth Barr Author. It (1) summarized the fifty years history of the notable Kansas Author's Club, and (2) gave a stimulating perspective on the advent of the new free verse. Poets might well take to heart, and inwardly digest the implied judgment of history on each generation of poets, as expressed in the following paragraphs:

"...The influence of Walt Whitman, Father of American Poetry, as distinguished from English Poetry, was beginning to be felt. The poets of Kansas were calling for a freer expression for the muse, both in form & in subject matter. They were in agreement with Clarence Stedman that the poetry of the time was lacking in virility. The spirit was smooth, beneath traditional forms, classicism, archaic expressions, but using out-worn creeds:

"He who works without complaining,
Does the Holy Will of God."

"This at a time when the underpaid workers were about to complain and demand higher wages! And young poets were about to espouse the cause. In New York, in every literary center in the East, and as far west as Chicago, poets were following the rugged Americanism of Whitman. Kansas was feeling the impact clear down to the grass roots.

"...Just about this time the nation-wide rebellion against old forms and out-worn creeds broke through the barriers, and "free verse" burst upon us. All discussion about "What is Poetry?" suddenly ceased. Anything was poetry.

"Poets in the Topeka center believed that it should be poetry itself, not the critic, not even the writer that dictated the form. And whatever form best conveyed the idea would be the one to use. These Kansans, along with Amy Lowell, of Massachusetts, defended free verse, although, and like Miss Lowell, they actually wrote very little of it themselves, because it lacked music—the one essential of poetry."

There you have it, an objective appraisal of that revolution and recurrent, never-ending expression of the need for a new perspective and the renewed vitality that will adequately allow a new generation of poets to extol their world.

IT IS BEST TO CHECK UP OFTEN!

Sometimes you pick up information in curious ways and places. I recently advised an author to report to the postal officials the use of a ms. without payment by a magazine. It had been held for some time. The writer followed my advice, and subsequently received a ruling from the Post Office Department, Inspection Service, Post Office Inspector in Charge, (in Denver) as follows:

"It is noted that the last transaction (referring to the last ms. sent to this editor) took place about five years ago. Therefore, any Federal action would be barred as a result by the Statute of Limitations, which runs out in three years. Under the circumstances, an investigation by this Service is not possible."

It would seem from this that writers must protect themselves from being defrauded via the mails within the above stated period. A complaint should be filed before the expiration of the three years. Although most editors disclaim responsibility for unsolicited mss., failure to acknowledge or return a ms. that is properly supported with a return envelop and sufficient postage, has resulted in investigation by postal authorities.

I am not a lawyer, but I believe unauthorized use for profit of a ms. is an offense, punishable under certain state laws.

Melvin Evans, former editor-in-chief of the PermaBooks line, will henceforth conduct an independent writing and editing service. His wife, Pauline Evans, an editor in the juvenile book field, is joining him. Their professional address: Briar Ridge Road, Danbury, Conn.

ALBERT R. KORN AWARD FOR QUATRAINS

Prizes of \$15, \$10 and \$5 will be awarded by Albert R. Korn in a contest for Quatrains. The prize winning poems will be published in REWRITE Magazine.

All poets are eligible. There are no fees or other special requirements to enter. The author may choose his own subject. Entries are limited to one quatrain. Submit poems, please, anonymously, in triplicate, and accompanied by a separate, sealed envelop containing the name and address of the author, on the inside, and the title of the poem on the outside.

Contest closes January 15, 1955. All poems are to be unpublished and typewritten. No poems will be returned and no responsibility will be insured for the loss of mss. So authors should retain copies of entries. The judges will be announced at the end of contest. Full report in REWRITE, March issue.

The three winning poems will be published in REWRITE. These may be republished in anthologies or elsewhere, if credit for first publication in REWRITE is given. All rights to all entries submitted in the Contest remain with the respective authors. Send entries to: Elva Ray Harris, REWRITE Magazine, 50 West St., Lunenburg, Mass.

Send in your contribution!

TRACE, James Boyer May, Box 1035, Hollywood 28, Cal., is a useful international directory and evaluator of poetry & little magazines. Published in Feb., Apr., June, Aug. and October.

CANADIAN POETRY Magazine, Arthur S. Bourinot, (published by Canadian Authors Association) Box 803, Postal Sta. 'B', Ottawa, Ontario, Can., was given an interesting analysis as a conservative, but well edited magazine. Pays 10¢ per word, \$1 minimum. Better check whether limited contributors from Canada. No statement to this effect, in August TRACE.

The CAROLINA QUARTERLY P. O. Box 1117, Chapel Hill, N. C., was also recommended. "Least academically-bound". Open to outsiders.

REWRITE

THE WCS SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Since 1942 we have administered a revolving fund, known as the WCS Scholarship Fund. It allows writers to enjoy the help of WRITERS' COUNSEL SERVICE and REWRITE without any sense of obligation and at little or no actual cost, depending upon the individual circumstances. The money has been made available by some of our good friends and the services we ourselves have contributed at times gratuitously. Over the years these sums can be counted in the hundreds of dollars. They have been amplified by the repayments of certain beneficiaries either in whole or part, thus sharing in the privilege of further extending the Fund's usefulness.

In 1953 for example, the Fund received in gifts, and often a few pennies returned to it at a time by hard pressed beneficiaries, the total of \$58.92. This was added to a slender balance carried over from previous years. In the course of the year 17 writers were aided to the extent of \$43.48. This does not of course include certain occasions when Bill & Elva helped deserving writers, and did not, for one reason or another, experience enough time, or the inclination, to charge up meticulously various items to the Fund. We gave it.

As of the time of writing this article the Fund has received for the year 1954, \$22.79 and has helped 20 writers. The total expenditures have been \$37.15. So, you see, Fund money does not lie idle very long in a bank balance. It goes out quickly, returns, only to roll out again to meet some second, third or fourth need. That is the special characteristic we enjoy most, a fulfillment of the philosophy we believe in so strongly, neighbors, good, friendly neighbors, working always to help each other. We all benefit in helping each to push his talent as far as it reasonably will go. And no one suffers by the competition of eager, enthusiastic creators contributing the warmth of their personality and fresh ideas to the common, community store.

There would be no wars if man ever learned this basic lesson from history: that it's always better to build than to destroy. More fun to share than to despoil and horde. And that there is never any real, lasting scarcities where true love of man, and faith in God shines. A form of security no ambitious self-seeking dictator can ever enjoy or create.

Market Note. A correspondent tells us The Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament, listed as a market for poetry, reported on Jan. 13th, that they do not use verse now.

Doubleday & Co. has announced a new pocket book series, Image Books. These will offer quality Catholic books in paper backs—mostly reprints of originals by various publishers. Prices will run 25¢ to 50¢.

A tip: Southeast Asia is a strong newspeg.

THREE CRAFTSMEN AND A THEORY

Recently, John P. Marquand was quoted: "A while ago I wrote a paper in which I tried to show that no historical novel can recapture the true spirit of the past, since the writer must always present it in terms of the present."

That offers a very interesting challenge, it seems to me, not only to all historically inclined writers of fiction, but also to every writer, who would stray out of a period in which fate or destiny has happened to cast him. It reminds one of Somerset Maugham's somewhat similar remark that while over a lengthy fiction life he wrote often about women, he would never think of attempting to go into a woman's mind, to write or give the illusion of thinking and feeling as a woman would.

For purposes of giving a friendly boost to Esther Forbes' last novel, a historical novel, Mr. Marquand has since admitted that he was mistaken. "I was amazed at how mistaken I was in this idea," said. "I have never seen the illusion of a period so beautifully presented." I confess that I do not like a flat statement of this kind. I do not believe in drawing sharp lines and saying: "This can be done and this cannot." For the very practical reason that the human spirit being what it is, sooner or later some craftsman will come along and make a sucker of you.

But it seems to me this is a pair of comments writers should treasure and turn over in their minds. Because it suggests limitations, and the really competent craftsman is constantly seeking to grow and thus by very nature is slowly pushing back the frontiers and limiting boundaries of a circumscribed, confining world. And is it not true that if we understand the nature of a problem, we've taken the first step in cracking it?

Both Esther Forbes and John Marquand have shown themselves over the years to be great craftsmen. It was an unusual privilege, I can assure you, to work closely with Esther for years at Durham, and to listen to John Marquand all one rainy afternoon there, too... Esther's novel is "Rainbow on the Road".

LESS RATHER THAN MORE IS A SAFE RULE

Here is a simple, but usable rule regarding lengths of mss. Most agents have told a great many writers over the years that "The most practical length for fiction is 3,500". This is because this wordage is approximately the longest length used by the secondary magazines, and the shortest length required by the slicks. The rule of course is flexible. But I believe that while this universally repeated figure has not changed in over 25 years (in good times and bad), an even 3,000 words is today a still better rule of thumb for the unknown writer trying for a first entering wedge. For non-fiction, much the best length is 1,500, never over 2,000.

REWRITE

A CONTROLLED MARKET FOR FILLERS

Recently we received an unusual offer for free lance writers from the Douglas Fir Plywood Association. Briefly, the free lance is invited to sell short items to the DFFPA and the latter will make whatever use of the items it chooses to and can, through its publicity department.

This would ordinarily mean (1) that editors could use such material free on release from the DFFPA; (2) that the DFFPA could also use the material in advertising, folders or other promotional literature. Presumably an author would not get a by-line on such feature fillers. But he would get the substantial payments offered by DFFPA. Were a writer clever enough to work up such stuff into a "full length" feature for a slick or even one of the larger secondaries, he might get a larger check. Or if he were an experienced trade or filler writer, he himself might market the same material several times, and so earn a larger amount.

What the DFFPA is doing, and Mr. McCallum admits it is something "brand new" for them and that the Association is feeling its way in new territory, is to offer a sure market at reasonably high pay for salable material the Association can use to promote its product. This is not open to beginning writers, but rather angled at writers who are already selling to trade journal or consumer publications. So read the announcement carefully and do not attempt meeting its requirements unless you have some original ideas and the ability to organize them fairly competently.

Douglas Fir Plywood Association, Winston H. McCallum, 1119 A St., Tacoma 2, Wash., is interested in purchasing short articles that deal with use of fir plywood in home & farm construction; uses by industry; do-it-yourself projects; general remodeling, and success stories of lumber dealers selling this kind of plywood.

The Association seeks "newsworthy stories suitable for use in either or both trade and consumer magazines. As samples it has written and prepared one story in each category. It will send these to writers who list several sales and indicate the type of articles written. It respectfully requests writers to submit their material only after a thorough study of the sample stories. The material is to be distributed to newspapers, trade, and consumer magazines. DFFPA wants articles 400 to 1,000 words, and will pay by the piece.

Note: the news release does not list the prices offered. But in a personal letter to Bill Mr. McCallum stated he was ready to pay (1) \$40 for articles of general interest to mass circulation magazines. They must be in practically final shape for submission. (2) \$25 for items for smaller magazines (100,000 or under circulation. \$15 for items requiring major rewriting or additional reporting.

MARKET AND EDITORIAL NEWS

The CONNECTICUT LITERARY REVIEW, John De Stefano, 1228 Meriden Road, Waterbury, Conn. a new magazine offered by the publisher who already sponsors POETRY DIGEST. "CLR will be limited to quality fiction: short shorts of literary distinction up to 2,000 words preferred; approximately 20 pages of the highest quality poetry; short essays on the state of fiction and poetry also used, as well as book reviews and 300/400 word literary sketches. Reports in a month. No pay, but 20 cash prizes annually. The magazine is a quarterly."

PROOF, Inc. reports that "GALLEY has had an unfortunate set back. There have been no issues since Vol. IV No. 2 last summer." (However, all paid unfilled subscriptions are to be refunded.) There will not be any issues, apparently, during 1954. But PROOF will continue to operate and an up-to-date directory will, it is hoped, come out in the Spring of 1955. Vol. IV No. 2 is still available, 75¢.

The SOUTHERN PLANTER, P. D. Sanders, Richmond, Va., reported in March that it was "sufficiently supplied with fiction". It further added: "we purchase most of our fiction, in fact, from ms. dealers, largely the following:

Gerard Chapman, 116 West Ave., Great Barrington, Mass.

George Lawrence Andrews, Box 2279, Raleigh, North Carolina.

The latter of these is not known to us. The former has been listed for several years as a syndicate. I would advise writers to contact these outlets before submitting mss. to discover their methods of handling mss. In no case should a writer pay any fees except the usual 10% commission, and certainly not in advance.

St. Joseph Magazine, Rev. Albert S. Bauman, C.S.B., St. Benedict, Ore., is naturally proud that it won the 1954 award for fiction given at the Catholic Press Convention. The Magazine also won in 1952 (there was no award in 1953.) New York professionals were the judges this year, and faculty members of Notre Dame University in 1952.

St. Joseph is a family type Catholic magazine, uses a couple of stories each month, and about 5 or six articles. It tries to advance the good points in Catholic Christian living. Two or three poems are also used, & one of these was by Grace Stillman Minck, a member of the WCS Family (See: June REWRITE Poetry workshop) in the July issue. A number of writers have told us, and we know by personal experience, too, that Mae Heggigan associate editor, is very friendly in dealing with their short stories. It pays good rates on acceptance. A market, in a word, a fiction writer should keep in mind.

REWRITE

UPWARD REPORTS ITS GREATEST NEED

UPWARD, Josephine Pile, 161 8th Ave., N., Nashville 3, Tenn. Florence Kerigan quoted Miss Pile as saying her "greatest need is for teen-age stories with a religious theme, but not 'corny'." I asked Miss Pile if she would let that one pass. She replied:

"I shall be glad to have you use the statement which I made to Miss Kerigan, for it is certainly a need in my periodical.

"As I have tried to think about the problem of the religious story and to study what it is that makes a good one, it seems to me that there are two clues: First, the character with whom the story deals must be a person who is delineated as the type of person, who could have a true religious experience. In other words, the thing which happens to that person must 'ring true'.

"In the Second place, it seems that the individual must do something himself. The miracle can happen to the person, but he must, necessarily, have done something to help himself out of his dilemma.

"Good missionary stories seem to be such a 'natural' for religious story papers, that I am surprised that more writers do not write them. Of course, a missionary story about a country where our denomination has worked & served, would 'come nearer making a sale.' I shall be glad to see a good missionary story about any country, however."

Note: remember that UPWARD is a juvenile, published for the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Writers should be familiar with the magazine and its policies. We are grateful to Miss Pile, and all the other editors who take time to write us such practical exclusive letters to make it easier for you to write them what they need.

A QUESTION OF COPYRIGHT

Here is something to avoid. A number of writers whose books have been issued by one or another subsidy or vanity publisher, have revealed to us that the copyright is in the name of the publisher. This means that as a matter of law the publisher controls rights and privileges of further use. It is practically standardized procedure for all reputable publishers to have their books copyrighted in the name of the author. All the royalty published books I have picked up at random to check on this, have been copyrighted in the name of the author. Even some anthologies have underscored that they merely are reprints, and in each case record singly the individual copyright notices of the individual authors represented.

REWRITE never advises subsidy or "vanity" publication, but if you ever do contemplate any such venture, or even legitimate royalty publication, insist that your book without fail be copyrighted in your name.

ALFRED HITCHCOCK ON SUSPENSE

The other night Alfred Hitchcock, the notable motion picture director, imparted the elements of suspense during an interview on the radio and TV program of "Sunday With Garroway," the NBC network two hour show. With a "Thank you" to Dave, we reprint the highlights of his practical talk.

"To create a suspense effect," Hitchcock stated, "you devise a set of circumstances, and then develop the consequences." He illustrated with a bedroom triangle, in which the audience sees that the wife and her lover, innocently or not, are in the bedroom together. There is a knock and the husband enters. "The audience knows that the lover is hiding in the closet or under the bed. Over all the scene that follows between the woman and her husband is laid the web of suspense. What will the wife do? Will her husband suspect, or discover the presence of the lover, and what will he do if he does? It is simply a matter of how tight the writer will 'pull the string.'"

Hitchcock used a suspense scene from one of his own films to point up another principle. "I once broke one of the fundamental rules," he continued. "There was a bomb. I placed it in a box and told the audience it was live. A little boy had to carry it through a good many streets of London. The audience knew it was likely to go off. Indeed, I had even told the audience it would explode at one o'clock. So every time the little boy, who did not know what was inside, passed a clock, the spectators shivered.

"But then I let the bomb explode. I was never forgiven." Because one fundamental is that you must always resolve the suspense to the satisfaction of the audience. Suspense is like a roller coaster. The audience wants to enjoy all the thrills, the dips & turns, to hear and feel the screams. But at the end it wants to step safely out on the platform again."

EDITORS HAVE REPORTED

CLASSMATE, Evelyn Gordon, just before our press time, told a member of the WCS Family that in the future CLASSMATE plans to print shorter serials of 4 or 5 chapters at most. That will make it more difficult for writers to shape serials out of mass. ultimately intended to be books.

GOOD BUSINESS, Clinton E. Bernard, Lee's Summit, Mo., a Unity School of Christianity publication, recently stated to a member of the WCS Family: "We like to have specific names, places, etc. in our biographical sketches." That rules out the piece the subject of which insists on anonymity.

COUNTRY GUIDE (Canadian) although listed in market lists, is reported by a correspondent not to have reported or replied about a ms. submitted as of 8-28-52.

REWRITE

NEWS AT WCS HOUSE

This year Bill and Elva flew to the Philadelphia Regional Writers' Conference and returned the same way. It was one of the most interesting and stimulating conferences that we have ever attended. Frankly, we have not seen before so many promising writers working under such an able and willing-to-give, give generously, staff. It was exciting. We have tried hard to pass along to our readers in this issue some of the many practical ideas we gathered in the sessions we were able to attend.

Bill inaugurated for the Conference a new technique of special personal conferences in which writers brought their special problems to him for discussion. In two days he worked with ten writers individually, read a limited amount of ms., and talked with a great many others at meals, between sessions, and during times when neither he nor they chanced to be occupied in workshops or conferences. Elva, too, followed much the same routine & also reported as many workshops as possible.

Afterwards, we again relaxed at the Solebury School in New Hope, sunning and swimming. We were fortunate enough to see an exceptionally fine production of T. S. Eliot's unusual comedy, "The Cocktail Party" and also "Carousel" at the Music Circus.

Back home, we found a lot of mss., a busy garden schedule and preparations for another conference, this one the 14th annual conference in Maine, waiting for us. But we did take time off to explore Boston Harbor with Edward Rowe Snow with some 30 members of the Appalachian Mountain Club.

This year we discovered one day, Bill has rounded out an even 25 years of professional work under the shingle of WRITERS' COUNSEL SERVICE.

Just before taking off for the Maine Conference we galloped down to Boston, some 40 miles southeast of us, for a personal conference, and then for dinner with Eleanore Jewett, our friend, who is such a fine writer of stories in books and occasionally in the magazines, too, for younger girls. We had a big evening of good talk.

REWRITE'S DECEMBER ISSUE

This issue has had so many special and exclusive reports come in from editors we are having to carry over a number of the pieces we had planned about the fine talks we listened to at the Phila. Regional Conference. But these will keep and the market information from editors would not. You will not, I am sure, however, want to miss any of them. They are very practical and helpful.

Similarly, there will be a lot of good reports also from the Maine Conference. Those who attended, and those who did not will be helped by these practical shop talks.

A JUVENILE MARKET, AND SOME COMMENT

CLASSMATE, Richard H. Rice, 810 Broadway, Nashville 2, Tenn. "You were accurately informed that we are interested in good stories regardless of the age group represented in the stories. Of course, we shall continue to place our accent in fiction on seniors & older youth.

"But we are eager now to see stories which dramatize problems of young adults & adults. In the main, we are interested, as are most editors, in stories that have sound structure or plot and strong characterization. Because of our wider readership our stories of necessity have to be well plotted; more and more, however, we favor those stories which have strong characters.

"One thing we are most interested in getting across is our growing policy toward the short story, a word limit of about 2,500. So we are always glad to consider the short short story (1,200 to 1,600 words). Another aspect of policy change concerns our interest in running more religious and ethical articles and features."

(Note: This exclusive report is a practical example of how many members of the "WCS Family" help us to bring you timely, accurate information about markets. Florence Kerigan, founder and chairman of the board, of the Phila. Regional Writers' Conference, recently told me of visiting several editors, on a research trip to the South. Generously, she gave me data about their needs. I asked each of these editors to confirm and add or subtract any details they cared to. The result, for one example, is Mr. Rice's kind & friendly letter.)

Please Remember. CLASSMATE, a Methodist publication, is one of the top magazines in the juvenile field. Material accepted by it and 12/15, the magazine for younger readers, is often syndicated on resale (with additional small checks for the authors) to magazines, that are published by other religious denominations. Therefore, you are frequently competing with experienced professional writers and many other lesser writers. And so, authors should treat this market with the identical respect that they ought to give to the adult slick magazines. Study the book, know whether you are competent to write for this level, and give the editor only your best.

Elva and I are glad to know that Florence Kerigan (Kerry, to all her many friends), a former long term editor in the religious juvenile field, has gone back to writing serials and already early in August had had her best year since she started free lancing. There is a bit of a point in this because through the past few years, noting the success of a number of professionals, I have urged other writers in the juvenile field to tackle serials and several part stories. Quite a few, I am glad to say, accepted the challenge, and their total "take" has exceeded \$1,000.

REWRITE

A VARIETY OF NEWS AND COMMENT

The Academy of American Poets which has awarded seven established poets \$5,000 each, plans now to guarantee annually the sale of 1,000 copies of a book of poetry. It is to be selected from unpublished mss. submitted by publishers. The book will be known as The Lamont Poetry Selection. It is made possible by a legacy to the Academy from Mrs. Thomas W. Lamont.

It is hoped the new type of award will uncover new genius. It will guarantee to each author a royalty of not less than 10%, or a minimum of \$250. Preference will be given to authors who have never had a book published or, at most, one or two. This year's award, which closed on July 1st, will be announced about Oct. 1st. The board of judges, five poets and critics, seem heavily weighted as a group favoring the literary type of poetry. But it is a fairly safe bet that few, if any, mss. submitted by editors of the so-called, advertising vanity presses will receive serious consideration for The Lamont Poetry Selection.

Henry E. Baker, editor of "Our Modern Poets," a regular reprint feature in the New York Times-Herald, and a longtime member of the WCS family, received an enthusiastic letter of appreciation from the local high school Virgil class for his own translations of "The Aeneid". The most scholarly and painstaking "serialized" display of poetry we have seen. He has been translating a snatch of one great classical poem or another for years.

Re: The Post Office Deficit. The RURAL NEW YORKER recently published the following "ruling" issued by the Post Office Dept.:

"Mail that is at all misdirected, is now being returned, without any attempt to check on the whereabouts of a recipient within the same city. (The Post Office, it is explained, no longer gives directory service.) This causes delay, additional expense in remailing charges. It also increases materially the Post Office deficit, because no revenue is earned on the return trip. Those who use the mails are blamed for this deficit, whether they are to blame or not."

On REWRITE copies that cannot be "delivered" by the Post Office, a clerk has to write down a correct, or forwarding, address. Then, the copy is returned to us for remailing at a cost of 3¢, plus the remailing fee!

Despite the fact that the Post Office Department is delaying your mss. and letters, and forcing you to pay twice to send either out, the Postmaster General has been moving heaven and earth to raise the rates on this reduced scale of service. Both the Postmaster and your Congressmen would no doubt welcome an expression of your opinion concerning this curious situation.

The Recent READERS' DIGEST \$52,000 Contest. Although now closed, offered you a fine opportunity to match your judgment against the readers as to what constitutes a strong article. Since the winners will not be publicized till the December issue, why not analyze the 30 articles in the August issue?

TWO "DON'TS" FOR FICTION WRITERS

Two mistakes that many inexperienced writers make in attempting to merchandise their fiction, are these. First, they use too much wordage. Because a few of the biggest circulation magazines print 5,000 word stories, a false assumption is made that all magazines are eager for that length. Nothing could be more false.

Agents will tell you that 3,000 word stories have a much better chance. This is because they represent the top length for the secondary magazines and smaller books, while they also serve as the shortest length that the big slicks are apt to be interested in. Thus you have two strings to your bow.

Peggy Dowst Redman of the SAT. EVE. POST, whom we have quoted concerning poetry on another page, commented on this to a client of ours several years ago: "Your agent gave you good advice about cutting," she wrote. "Once in a while we find a longer story so compelling that we use it as is, but this is rare. For the most part, we just cannot grant more than 5,000 words to a short story. Those that are longer simply increase the odds against them. Or else we make the author cut them, if the tale appeals to us well enough. In my experience with cutting, I have found that mostly very few stories suffer by it. In fact, it tends to improve the pace and the general effect, though of course this not always true."

Second, hosts of writers want to do short story series, although with rare exceptions you never see such things in print. Once again, Peggy Dowst Redman is a good authority: "We are definitely discouraging fiction series. (Not the same thing as a serial. Ed.) Our readership surveys show that reader interest is higher usually in stories having a fresh set of characters. Another hazard, the writer thinking in terms of a series is apt to find it very hard to make any one story, in the series, stand on its own feet, as it has to.

"It is too easy to leave something for the next story to clean up. Or to let the central character turn into a mere by-stander. Those are only a couple of the difficulties. Why don't you try just one story about your MC, and concentrate on making it the best, most fully-rounded story you can, and let any ideas of a sequel wait?"

That is good advice. Sequels have developed on occasion from reader demand for them. And one difficulty Mrs. Redman was probably too tactful to mention is the series writer allows to trip him. I remember one series in which a client of ours alternated an acceptance, a rejection, an acceptance, and a rejection in that order. I replotted two of the rejections and helped the author to resubmit and sell them (!) over the strenuous objections of the agent. Editors, however impatient, don't like that form of heart failure.

REWRITE

NEW BOOKS FOR WRITERS

LOVE STORY WRITER. Daisy Bacon. Hermitage House. \$3.00. Not so much a specific treatise for writers (although there is a lot of practical information!), this book is rather the outgrowth of Daisy Bacon's accumulated experience as a great pulp editor, & her interest in people. Her wise, wide knowledge of the magazine business and her crisp, cool yet emotionalized comments thereon shouldn't be missed by anyone who hopes to sell editors anywhere across the board.

The WRITER'S HANDBOOK. Ed. A.S. Burack. The Writer. \$5.00. The 1954 edition now contains 79 articles from The Writer and elsewhere. A feature of special interest of course is the well specialized lists of writers' markets, a dozen major categories. And also the list of literary agents, rather carefully weeded to give a representative selection of large and small reputable firms. (No advertising literary agents are included!) In general this is the best market list, we believe, for the writer who wishes to avoid any disappointing experiences, to use.

THE ARTS OF LIVING. Preface by Gilbert Highet. Simon & Schuster. \$3.00. A stimulating series of essays by well known writers, and others, originally published in VOGUE. Mature and witty observations on the art of the mind, of living with oneself and with other people. Delightful reading, good food for a writer to enrich his mind with.

A FEW EDITORIAL REPORTS

Alumnae Advisory Center, Alice Gore King, ex. sec., 541 Madison Ave., NYC 22, having a membership of about 20 women's colleges, is the publisher of several amusingly instructive pamphlets (25¢ each) about problems of job hunting. "On Stage" (the job interview) offers hints that are applicable to writers feeling a need for tackling editors in their offices.

CHRISTIAN LIFE now pays on Acc., not on pub.

Once again, REWRITE and AMERICAN WEAVE in friendly association are sponsoring a "Durham Chap Book Award". I.e., publication for an outstanding ms. of poems submitted at the University of New Hampshire Conference. The winner will be announced about the time REWRITE goes to press by Loring Williams, who is serving his second year on the staff. Actually, he has been a devoted, though unofficial member, most of the years that Bill & Elva served there. A friend we treasure.

AMERICAN WEAVE, Loring Williams, 1559 East 115th St., Cleveland 6, Ohio, is one of the discriminating poetry magazines. In the last issue it listed 3 awards of \$5. Many distinguished names in its 40 pages, poets and poet-editors and critics.

Catholic Press Association, 150 East 39th St., NYC 16, N.Y. new edition of its direc-

INTERESTING GENERAL READING

FUTURE INDEFINITE. Noel Coward. Doubleday & Co. \$4.50. Strictly entertainment for the reader and royalties for the author, who is recounting here his experiences during World War II. Gay, glamorous, frothy and no serious or dull moments. Discreetly unrevealing

ME AND MY RUSSIAN WIFE. Eddy Gilmore. Doubleday & Co. \$3.75. This is also entertainment, but written by the former head of the Moscow bureau of the Associated Press, an American newsmen, a country boy from Alabama, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting. You get quite a lot for your money.

AMERICAN WAYS OF LIFE. George R. Stewart... Doubleday & Co. \$3.95. A serious, yet light hearted and urbane study of American characteristics. Some of it was first written for use as lectures in Athens under the Fulbright Act. Good background stuff for writers.

MURDER IN PASTICHE. Marion Mainwaring. Macmillan Co. \$2.75. This is a spoof on 9 famous detectives in fiction, who without benefit of their equally distinguished authors, find themselves facing an unsolved murder aboard a transatlantic liner. The presuming, amusing Miss Mainwaring then parodies stylistically Agatha Christie, Erle Stanley Gardner, Mickey Spillane, etc. You have to know detective stories to fully appreciate things, but writers can learn from the form and the technique of this book.

SIDESTREET. Robert O. Bowen. Alfred A. Knopf. \$3.00. A short novel that is rather depressing and close to caricature despite the author's very sincere indignant refusal to accept the negative and commonplace respectability of his heroine. Again, writers willing to study this book carefully will find their own ideas of novel writing sharpened.

Note: the WRITERS' BOOK CLUB, although it does not handle books now, is always glad to advise readers about their personal needs.

tory of 557 U. S. Catholic publications. A valuable market list.

Curtis Publishing Co., through its subsidiary, **Curtis Circulation Co.,** is said to be readying a new weekly to cover TV & TV programming. Not named yet, and will be limited at first to selected areas in the East. A newsstand proposition chiefly.

WOMAN'S HOME COMPANION began last month a trial run through January of very short condensations of best-selling novels (15,000 to 20,000 words). Not particularly recent ("The Egyptian" and "The Silver Chalice".) Serialization of new novels will continue.

News-peg. "Do-it-yourself" is being pushed by big business (Nat. Retail Hardware Association and 44 brand-name mfgs.). October will be the month for promotion. But it's a year round subject of interest now. Use it.

REWRITE

SOME THOUGHTS ON PLANTING

Planting is one of the most important devices, and one of the most useful, that any writer can possibly have at his command. He can do practically anything to his reader's emotions, if he learns to plant convincingly. It takes a good deal of the curse off a coincidence, if you admit to the reader you know it is coming up and even planned it. A plant prepares the reader as to the likelihood of something taking place. If a reader knows that it might happen, he is more certain to believe it could happen.

A plant is a promise. "Johnny woke up and his first thought was that something special hung over him, like a heavy weight. Then he remembered. Today, the winter carnival's big climax, the cross-country ski race, was to be run off. And he could have entered it, if he had not told Paula, who had broken her leg coasting, he would come over and exhibit his stamp collection for her." Rough, of course, but there you have raised two possibilities in the mind of the reader. He may see the carnival race with all of its drama and color. And the conflict that will engage Johnny's emotions, has been placed squarely between him and his heart's desire.

A plant may be negatively expressed. In a scene two characters may discuss the possibility of a situation developing in a special way. One character may state definitely that it cannot and won't turn out that way. The reader accepts this statement as gospel truth because the author is in command, and he wouldn't have a character say it, unless it were true. But later in the story we see the situation turned inside out like a boy's sweater. The so-called "Perfect Crime" story is always of this type. The author always plants his surprise ending by denying it or leading away from it first. The crook tells the reader and his own confidants that he's thought of everything. You know he has not, but the skilled author does a bit of sleight of hand. At the very moment that he plants, he distracts your attention, too. He draws a red herring across your path, so you will not see the method by which the crook is to be trapped. Yet when he is, clever planting has made it so plausible that you accept it immediately.

A story is really a thoroughly artificial mechanism when you come right down to it. A writer creates the illusion of life, not an actual piece of real life itself. An author must straddle the fence and see his characters as they see themselves and also as the reader will see them. He makes his story an infinitely more convincing affair as he recognizes its frailties and acts to forestall the reader's discovering them. That is what planting has for its purpose. You are guileful, even at times deceitful. Planting never works by the straight out process of the amateur, who gasps hysterically: "Oh, I forgot to explain." No, the "born" story-tell-

er, seeing that he has some thin ice ahead, nonchalantly sets up the situation in such a way that either the reader does not see the danger, or he accepts it as the natural and entirely convincing premise that would occur in "real" life.

Do you recall Stevenson's marvellous story, "The Sire de Maletroit's Door"? I doubt if you told a reader straight out that your story would concern a man's being trapped & forced to marry a woman he'd never known, you could get him to read it. And if you showed the reader that this was all based on a remarkable coincidence, he would be still less inclined to waste his time. Stevenson, however, plants the premises so skilfully that the reader accepts the extraordinary, unreal situation.

The story is full of premises that prepare the reader so he will accept the situation, when its full import strikes him. But these premises are used first to characterize the hero and to justify his background. It's only when the man has walked into the trap and has met the girl, that Stevenson "explains" the tricky coincidence of how the wrong man is caught. And then he justifies his explanation very neatly by releasing it through a speech by the girl, who is emotionally concerned because her wicked old uncle's plans have gone awry. The story is really an outstanding example of how not to overdo planting. Stevenson, fully aware that his material is romantic and dramatic, knows when to play up suspense and mystery instead of foreshadowing in advance.

That is another trick in the armory of an experienced author that lesser writers seem slow to learn. Instead of having a character reflect about a situation, or permitting the author himself to point his blackboard-stick and "tell" the reader didactically, it is always better technique to bring characters together in a conflict scene and allow them to "show" the reader emotionally why a certain fact is natural and inescapable. In this famous short story that employs such a dramatic technique, you can find many excellent examples of how to bring out superficially unconvincing premises under emotional tension so that the reader will accept them.

I have said that a story is artificial. It is. But it makes the reader believe in it—by the magic of its illusion. That is really the fun of writing. A story is built out of snippets of fact and emotional stereotyped thinking on the part of readers. A writer must develop his story out of life as he knows it. He bolsters his "argument" by imitating scenes or experiences he has seen, by setting his characters against scenes he depicts accurately. But he also keeps a keen, practical eye on what is dramatically effective. Thus, good writing represents a constant jiggling this way and that to secure a compromise between real and stage truth. A good plant helps you to put a jiggle over.

REWRITE

LET'S LOOK AT PLAYWRITING

Several queries about writing plays periodically appear in our mail. As we try hard to make REWRITE assist writers with specific answers to individual problems, I am going to treat this subject now. I believe it will be most helpful, however, if we handle the general background of playwriting first and then in later discussions take up principles and techniques.

A writer in this field more than in other types of writing, is faced with the problem of where he is going to sell his product. A friend of mine in Show Business used to say that there are four steps: get an idea, work it up, sell it, produce it. That is undeniably true both in the Broadway and so-called non-commercial theater. Nowhere can just writing be more sterile. You have got to be fairly definite on what type of audience is going to be interested in your play.

The Broadway theater of course is a worse gamble than the horses. So few plays go over even when you get them produced. And the task of interesting a manager, getting huge financial backing and then a satisfactory & artistic production is enough to stifle the ambition of all but the most passionate theater lovers. Most playwrights in this field come to the theater from other media or the non-commercial theater. They have developed a reputation or at least some experience or contacts that get them a hearing. The summer theater, the college and community playhouses are almost a must place to gain try-out approbation of an idea.

Here in New England we have had for nearly two years the New England Theater Conference, which has for only a small \$2 membership fee been able to bring all the different phases of the theater together to think and talk about their common problems. It is a salutary project we are glad to recommend (address: Robert Warfield, Gershwin Theater Workshop, 84 Exeter St., Boston 16, Mass.) & through it you can also join ANTA, the larger, national organization.

In the non-commercial theater you have an extremely wide audience to write for. Perhaps you will wish to try the adult section represented by the university and community playhouses. Or the even hungrier 'teen age, i. e., high school theater. And then there's the children's theater. There are a variety of groups pretty well established in several New England centers. They are strictly amateur, although they charge admission, and in some cases go on tour. Finally, there is the small town and rural type audience that desires homely homespun entertainment, often in the form of short one act plays or readings.

You need to be familiar with each of these types of audience, either by personal knowledge or study of the plays to be had inexpensively from various play publishers. The

determined writer will do research both in a regular reading of catalogues and by visiting productions in his community and wherever he can find them.

Requirements vary. Almost every group appreciates simple scenery and few changes of setting. But the high school directors prefer the play that does not call for extended dramatic talent, but does give an opportunity for large numbers of players to be given a chance to appear. The women's clubs on the other hand want small casts and often a cast entirely of women. Therefore an author is smart who can plan his play so that it is expandable or contractable. Some directors, I know, have been known to write in parts to suite their personal needs.

It goes without saying that entertainment is a prime requisite. Nothing very involved as to plot; nothing heavy or arty. Comedies and farces are best. It is regrettable that farce situations which move rapidly and allow for plenty of belly laughs are often in greatest demand. But more and more, I think, plays that "leave you with something" prove popular other things being equal. One of the great successes in the early days was a fantasy, "Three Pills In a Bottle" by Rachel Field, first produced at the 47 Workshop at Harvard.

Although mystery stories are popular, suspense is a tricky thing to play with. Amateur productions are likely to drag and so, if the effect is not contrived very simply, it may be ruined by faulty acting or direction, or both. The non-professional theater, you see, often over-reaches itself. It tries alternately to do Broadway hit plays, or an amateurish and obvious piece of "corn". But surprisingly, it will do good stuff, if you can make such a play simple, understandable, appealing.

One of the simplest but most necessary of rudiments is the "ice-breaker". Always make a good start. Get your play off with a positive, direct appeal to your audience. And lay in, build into the first page of lines, a good "laugh" line or piece of business. It is a good idea to have an amusing situation and have a crackle of humorous lines, so if the players muffle one laugh, they will likely get another.

The purpose of all this is to warm up the audience. If you can wangle one good laugh, or a succession of small ones, your listeners will settle back and enjoy themselves. A group of inexperienced actors will also get confidence. You yourself may commit a variety of sins and still get by with it if you break the ice quickly and then space laughs that seem natural and not too forced through the remainder of the play.

Remember, too, that audiences like to cry occasionally. And if you can manage the cry that also draws a smile, you are made. Plays should project emotion, warm, human appeal.